

# THE HEART OF CHRISTMAS

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## Hope Is At The Heart Of Christmas

**Isaiah 9:2-7; Matthew 1:22-23; Romans 15:4**

*6 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

The prophet Isaiah writes one of the most classic Old Testament prophecies about the coming birth of Christ. The passage he writes is born of gloom and darkness. The world had felt the full weight of sin, and it had wreaked havoc on all of creation. Isaiah offered in chapter nine something the Jewish people needed more than anything—hope. Hope that one day someone would come to make all things right and restore what had been broken. The birth of Jesus was the fulfillment of that hope, and it offers us hope in our lives today.

### **Think:**

The birth of Jesus was a promise that actually came to pass. We can trust that Jesus is still working today, and that gives us hope.

### **Feel:**

No matter what we face in life right now, anything is possible through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

### **Do:**

Consider how God has been faithful in the past to give us hope for the present and future.

We can learn much about having hope by watching how children embrace the holiday season. Nothing

says “hope” like the Christmas list children write down during this season. From the moment they write it down, they have unwavering hope that it will come to pass.

However, the true reason there is hope at the heart of Christmas is not because of gifts but because of the birth of Jesus Christ. His arrival on the earth fulfilled a prophecy spoken hundreds of years ago.



**Read Isaiah 9:2-7.** This passage makes two significant statements. This first is an acknowledgment of the brokenness and darkness that surrounded Israel due to sin and corruption. The second is the hope of a dawning light through the birth of a child who would one day make all things right.

The book of Matthew also reminds us of Isaiah’s writings. The gospel writer connected what Isaiah had prophetically written with what had taken place in a manger in Bethlehem. **Read Matthew 1:22-23.** All of these events took place to fulfill the prophecy from the Old Testament, which claimed there would be a child born as a light in the darkness and hope for all people. The child would be named Immanuel, which means God with us.

## POINT #1 – THE PRESENCE OF DARKNESS THREATENS OUR HOPE

The center of the Christmas story is the birth of Jesus. He fulfills the Israelites' hope that God would push back the darkness and shine a bright light into the world.

One of the reasons Christmas resonates in our hearts is that we, too, live in a world similar to Israel. Our world is dark and corrupt because of the sin that so easily entangles it. There is war, disease, conflict, and oppression all around us. We, too, need the Christ child to usher in a light to push back the darkness around us.

Christmas reminds us that whatever we hope for in our lives—healing, restoration, forgiveness, or a fresh start—is available to us through Immanuel, who is God with us. Hope is not a result of the absence of conflict, difficulty, struggle, or trial. Hope is a result of the presence of God.

### Discussion Question:

- ✝ How would you define hope in your own words?

## POINT #2 – GOD'S PRESENCE HAS COME TO GIVE US HOPE

The hard part about hope is that it often takes longer than we would like to be fulfilled. Like the Jewish people experienced, hope requires patience.

Isaiah saw that one day in the future, God would bring a great light and salvation through the birth of a child. It was not until hundreds of years later that Matthew recorded Jesus's birth in Bethlehem. Jesus is the very presence of God on earth. He offers forgiveness of sin, destruction of evil, and the promise of eternal life.

So why do we read Isaiah's prophecy each year during Christmas? Seeing God's faithfulness in the past gives us deep and abiding hope in the present and unwavering trust in the future. The apostle Paul appealed for hope to those who trust in Christ as he wrote a letter to the early church in Rome.

**Read Romans 15:4.** Paul said everything written in the past—all of the prophecy and fulfillment—was meant to teach us how to hold onto faith in God to answer our prayers. What has been written gives us

endurance and encouragement so that we might have hope. We must revisit the prophetic words of the Old Testament and the fulfillment that comes through the birth of Jesus because it reminds us that God can be trusted to come through and meet us in our greatest time of need.

### Discussion Questions:

- ✝ How is Jesus' birth the fulfillment of long-awaited hope?
- ✝ Why is it so hard to wait on God to move in our lives?

## POINT #3 – AT THE HEART OF CHRISTMAS IS HOPE

Though there are many distractions during the Christmas season, this devotional reminds us that hope is offered to us through Jesus's arrival in the manger.

Our God is always right on time. He knows exactly what we need, and he can be trusted to reveal the light of Christ to push back the darkness in our lives. In a land full of deep darkness, a light has indeed dawned.

Express your hope in God by bringing him the things that are heavy on your heart.

### Discussion Questions:

- ✝ How has God been faithful in your life?
- ✝ How does that strengthen your trust in Him?

**Prayer:** *Father God, we come to you in need of hope—hope that you are faithful and have provided all we need by sending your Son to us. We ask that the light of his life would shine into our lives and lift our heads. We offer to you the areas of our lives where we need your presence. We trust you today with our very lives, and we look forward to seeing how you will come through. Thank you for the hope that can only come from you. Thank you for showing us the heart of Christmas. Amen.*



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